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# AESGP Annual Meeting, Day 1: Supporting Innovation In Self-Care During Times Of Uncertainty

by [David Ridley](#)

“Supporting innovation in self-care during times of uncertainty” is the theme of this year's AESGP Annual Meeting in Madrid, Spain, which was opened on 7 June by AESGP president Birgit Schuhbauer and president of the Spanish consumer health industry association, ANEFP, Alberto Bueno.

Association of the European Self-Care Industry president Birgit Schuhbauer launched the 58th Annual Meeting in Madrid, Spain, noting that the conference will be the first one to take place face-to-face since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

“After more than two years of hybrid meetings,” Schuhbauer – who is also vice president of Johnson & Johnson’s Europe, Middle East, Africa and developed markets OTC operations – said this gives her hope that “we are back to normal” and that “face-to-face meetings are here to stay.”

Given its encouraging performance during such uncertain times, Schuhbauer insisted that the European self-care industry had the right to be “cautiously optimistic” about the future.

While the pandemic has disrupted our lives in unprecedented ways, she noted that it has also served as a catalyst for positive change.

[The program of the 58th Annual Meeting](#), which takes place on the 8 June at the Hotel Meliá Castilla, and includes sessions on self-care market trends, regulatory innovation, sustainability and health literacy, reflects the many challenges and opportunities that industry is currently facing, Schuhbauer reflected.

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In terms of regulation, Schuhbauer pointed to the ongoing implementation of the European Union Medical Devices Regulation and the upcoming reform of European pharmaceutical legislation as developments that are “absolutely critical for our industry.”

Schuhbauer also noted the profound and continued transformation being wrought by digitalization, which is “providing the motivation to make us further explore how various technologies can be used in healthcare.”

And perhaps more than any other trend, Schuhbauer noted the impact of climate change on the region’s consumer health sector.

The wide-ranging implications of global warming have prompted the association to place the concept of “One Health” at the heart of its operations going forward, she said, enabling the AESGP to bring the connections between human health, animal health and the environment into better focus.

## Digital Here To Stay

Following Schuhbauer, Spanish consumer health industry association ANEFP president Alberto Bueno said it was a pleasure to welcome delegates once again to the country.

Bueno, who was recently re-elected ANEFP president for a third term, echoed Schuhbauer’s celebration of industry’s performance during the pandemic, noting the way that the Spanish association’s members had supported consumers in accessing essential self-care products during such difficult times. (Also see "[People On The Move: Appointments At Haleon, Hikma And ANEFP](#)" - HBW Insight, 30 May, 2022.)

ANEFP’s work in fostering collaboration between stakeholders – healthcare professionals and regulators, as well as consumers – has been central in this respect, he reflected.

Like Schuhbauer, Bueno – who is also CEO of Barcelona-based Laboratorios Salvat – emphasized the importance of climate change for European industry.

For Spain’s self-care industry, however, digitalization is perhaps the most immediate challenge, he suggested.

“The online business is coming,” he warned. “We have to accept it.”